



*Docket
05-00141*

19 October 2005

Patsy Fulton
Tennessee Regulatory Authority
460 James Robertson Pkwy.
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Ms. Fulton,

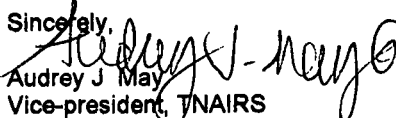
It has come to our attention that there are now two applicants for provision of 2-1-1 services to residents of Campbell, Claiborne, Cocke, Hamblen, Hancock, Monroe, Morgan and Scott counties in east Tennessee. These two applicants are United Way of Metropolitan Nashville (UWMN) and Helping Hands Home Assistance (HHHA). Both are members of TNAIRS, the state affiliate of the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, the professional association for information and referral providers. However, there may be significant differences in the abilities of these two agencies to provide the needed information and referral services to residents of these eight counties.

In its petition to TRA, HHHA provided information regarding its information and referral services for seniors. At the time of its application for TNAIRS membership a few months ago, there was sufficient question by TNAIRS board members as to the nature of HHHA information and referral services that we asked for additional information. We were satisfied that HHHA provided some I & R services and seemed interested in being more involved in the provision of such services. However, a long list of services on its current website lists only a few that are actually I & R services.

In comparison, UWMN has been providing 2-1-1 services to a several county area in middle Tennessee since August 2004 (through contract with Family & Children Service, First Call for Help-Rutherford County and The Family Center-Maury County). Calls are received, tracked and monitored using sophisticated Resource House software and a Nortel Business Communication Manager telephone system. Several members of the UWMN 2-1-1 call centers are nationally certified in information and referral by AIRS and have been actively involved with TNAIRS. By the end of their first year, these 2-1-1 call centers had successfully fielded more than 60,000 calls. In addition, when East TN I & R lost funding for its 2-1-1 call center earlier this year, its board reorganized services and chose to route its calls all the way from Knox County and eight contiguous counties to the 2-1-1 call center provided through UWMN as well.

So, we have two TNAIRS members which have applied to take responsibility for this heavily needed service. TNAIRS supports all its members in their efforts to provide professional I & R services throughout the state and to extend those services to residents who are not yet served by 2-1-1. But we also have a responsibility to help ensure that the residents of Tennessee receive the best 2-1-1 services available. Given the evidence we have seen to date, UWMN has exhibited a stronger proven track record in providing I & R and 2-1-1 services. Because of that, we must recommend that TRA grant the petition for allocation of the 2-1-1 number in Campbell, Claiborne, Cocke, Hamblen, Hancock, Monroe, Morgan and Scott counties to United Way of Metropolitan Nashville.

We look forward to continuing to work with all of our members and the TRA to ensure that all Tennessee residents have the best I & R and 2-1-1 services possible.

Sincerely,

Audrey J. May
Vice-president, TNAIRS
Public Services Supervisor
2-1-1 LINC, Memphis Public Library
3030 Poplar Avenue
Memphis, TN 38111

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Cc: Ron Jones, Chairman - Tennessee Regulatory Authority